

prom night by reallylikeseggos

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Summary:

Mike Wheeler hated school dances. They were stupid, they were pointless, there were better things to do with his time. And while he knew this to be true, he also knew the biggest truth about why he hated them: he broke his promise.

prom night

Spring, 1988

Flo grew concerned when Jim Hopper didn't report to his position on a cloudy Friday morning.

It's widely known around the town of Hawkins that their local chief wasn't exactly a morning person. Even after the events surrounding the fall of 1983 and his youngest adoptive son, it was quite the monumental task to motivate Jim Hopper in the mornings.

Even so, it was unlike him to be *this* late. Especially on a Friday.

Flo sighed, shaking her head as she made her way to the phone on the wall, mechanically punching in the numbers. *At least it's Friday.*

Jim Hopper had been doing this for years. He'd become familiar with the sights around the tiny wooden box, accustomed to the sounds filling the air.

What he *hadn't* become accustomed to, was the idea that one day he'd come and she'd actually be there. But here he stood, and there she sat, casually chewing on an Eggo he'd left for her.

He felt like she should have known what to say, but he was at a loss. All these years that he'd visited this spot, as a sort of memorial, he began to let go of the idea that she was out there. Though he knew that there was always a chance, as he and Joyce had discussed many times, they agreed that it would be better to not get their hopes up (though Hopper knew she had accumulated several of Nancy Wheeler's hand-me-downs and was clearing out Jonathan's old

bedroom at a faster pace than was probably necessary – causing a tug in his chest every time he thought about it).

She still wore that flannel she'd acquired nearly five years ago, the dress nearly tattered to shreds (not to mention it didn't even fit her anymore). Her hair was thoroughly matted and filthy, falling in a light brown color just below her chin.

And yet, against all odds, here she was. Biting into her third waffle, when she noticed she wasn't alone and whipped around to face him.

She'd grown considerably, that much was obvious, but Hopper noted the eyes. The same wide, inquisitive, hesitant brown eyes looking at him right now. He tried to set aside his utter disbelief that it was even possible, that she could have thrived for nearly five years in a place like that.

He cracked a smile, shaking his head slightly in disbelief. She raised her eyebrows as she waited for him to ask her a thousand questions, ask who she was, anything. He crouched to make eye contact with her, and she watched hesitantly as he approached.

He smiled again. "How about we get you home, kiddo?"

Hopper decided that going to work that Friday morning was not in the cards.

Joyce Byers was preparing to leave for work when she heard the front door opening. She furrowed her brows in confusion before walking the hallway stretch blocking the door.

"Hello? Who's there-"

She stopped dead in her tracks as Hopper guided a timid brown haired girl into the house. She'd recognize this girl anywhere, at any age.

Joyce approached Eleven slowly, closing her mouth and quickly shifting from shock to concern.

“Eleven?” she asked quietly, the girl in question looking up at Joyce. Joyce smiled. “How about we get you a shower, yeah?”

For the first time since she’d been found, Eleven spoke.

“Thank you,” she whispered, offering Joyce her version of a small smile.

And that was all of the confirmation Joyce and Hopper needed to know that Eleven belonged in their home.

Will Byers returned home after school that day to find both Hopper and Joyce’s cars parked in their driveway.

Upon entering the house, Will was greeted with the sight of his mother, adoptive father, and a face he somehow knew sitting at the dining room table. Somehow, but he couldn’t begin to explain how. She wore a slightly oversized pink sweater with light blue leggings underneath, and her hair fell below her chin in soft waves. Her brown eyes studied him carefully, knowingly.

She knew him too.

She smiled as Joyce rose from the table and stepped towards Will, a hopeful smile on her face. Will turned his attention back to Joyce, eyebrows raised. “What’s up guys?”

Hopper and Joyce exchanged looks before both turning their attention to Will, Joyce taking one of his hands in both of hers.

“Sweetie, I’d like you to meet Eleven,” Joyce introduced him, leading him to a chair next to where she sat. Will obediently sat down, giving Eleven a friendly smile.

"Nice to meet you Eleven," Will said politely. She looked up toward him, giving him a small smile back.

"Nice to meet you too."

"I know it's sudden," Joyce started, taking a seat next to Hopper. Hopper slid his hand across the tabletop to hold hers, an encouraging expression controlling his features. Joyce took a deep breath, flashing an appreciative smile to Hopper before turning back to face Will. "But, Eleven... she's going to be your sister."

"Sister?" Will repeated, the word rolling off of his tongue easier than he thought it would. He looked over at Eleven, who had taken to staring at the tabletop again.

"Yes, sister," Joyce nodded, searching Will's expression for a reaction of any sort. Hopper lightly squeezed her hand reassuringly.

Will looked over at Eleven again, who had shifted her gaze to Will. He smiled at her, looking back towards Joyce.

"I've always wanted a sister."

Joyce let out a breath she didn't know she was holding, a broad grin forming on her face. Hopper traced the back of her hand with his thumb, smiling himself.

Eleven smiled as well, finally knowing the warmth of having a family of her own.

After a later conversation with Will, Joyce found herself in her bedroom at almost midnight, fixing an old bridesmaid dress from the depths of her closet.

Joyce had asked Will if he could spend time with Eleven the next day, as it was a Saturday and Joyce wanted to get her acclimated to her new home. Will objected to this, on the basis of prom night.

However, after closet searching from Joyce and a request from Eleven to attend, it was decided that she would go to the prom and surprise the other boys.

Joyce was having a hard time averting the conversation from Mike Wheeler; as soon as Eleven ("El", as she nearly insisted on being called) was comfortable with speaking, she immediately began asking for him. Joyce felt a sense of internal conflict at this; she wanted to reunite the two, but she also knew that El had returned so little time ago. She didn't want to exhaust El, she had so much to get used to quickly.

However, at the suggestion of prom, it didn't seem like such a bad idea anymore. El clearly missed Mike and Joyce didn't need confirmation that Mike missed her just as much.

She had half a mind to call Karen Wheeler, but upon begging from Will that making it a surprise would be the best idea, she ignored this urge.

She kept her hands busy working on the dress, a light pink with a tight waist and slightly puffy shoulders, sleeves long. The dress flared at the waist, a peter pan collar gracing the neckline. A bow tied the waist in the back, and Joyce had added sparkles to the skirt and frills to the hem. Joyce leaned back and admired her work, hoping that she would be able to give El a prom to remember with what she could do.

"Where is he?" Lucas asked impatiently, checking the analog clock for the third time in the past two minutes. Mike rolled his eyes.

"Calm down Lucas, he'll be here. It's only a few minutes past seven anyway."

"We said seven, didn't we?" Dustin protested, pulling at the collar of his dress shirt. "It was Will's idea to come to this thing."

The boys walked into the gym of Hawkins High School, the entire place covered in streamers and lanterns hanging from the ceiling. Tables littered the sides of the gym, food tables set up in their positions at the front and back of the gym. The lines were already forming for the photo booth decorated with balloons as people shuffled in past the three boys.

Mike shook his head again, giving Dustin a pointed look. "Will's idea, huh? So you didn't ask Shannon Smith to save you a dance after Chemistry on Tuesday?"

"That's beside the point."

"Is it?"

"Guys, focus! Will!" Lucas interjected, taking another look around the gym.

"And you're not looking for Janet at all?" Dustin teased, smiling at his own joke. Lucas scoffed as Mike snickered.

"At least I have a date!"

"Hey, Shannon Smith is saving me a dance. That has to count for something."

Mike shook his head, laughing at the bickering of his friends. Prom was Will's idea, as they hadn't attended any school functions in the entirety of their school careers. He wasn't particularly keen on school dances, much less prom, like his friends. Though he wasn't positive, he knew his reason was a little different.

Mike Wheeler hated school dances.

It seemed pointless. Why would he want to spend five hours in a gym dancing with a girl he probably wouldn't know very well just for the sake of going to a school dance?

While Mike could make this argument to himself for an indeterminable amount of time, he knew the truth. He always put off the front that school dances were stupid, they were pointless, there were better things to do with his time. And while he knew this to be

true, he also knew the biggest truth:

He broke his promise.

He could still see her everywhere. On the tabletops in science classrooms, in the circular seats of cafeteria tables. He saw her in yellow boxes of toaster waffles, in nosebleeds, in pink dresses and in buzzcuts. He saw her in his basement, as the fort hadn't been touched since she used it last. He never could bring himself to take it down, but it was too painful to sit inside. He tried once, nearly a year after she'd gone. That was the last time Mike Wheeler had cried himself to sleep.

He had promised her; he promised they would be home soon. He promised that she could eat all of the Eggos she wanted. He promised she'd have a bed of her own. He promised he would save her, just as she had saved him.

He broke that promise, and now she's gone. *She's been gone. She's not coming back.*

Mike sighed. He didn't like to let his thoughts turn to her, as his friends would always question why he suddenly grew quiet or if he needed something.

Of course he needs something. He needs *someone*. But he'll never have her again, and for almost five years that's been his downfall. Even now, all of his friends had some sort of date arrangement at this prom, and Mike could never even bring himself to consider it.

How pathetic, he laughed to himself. He can't get over a girl that doesn't exist anymore.

No matter how many times Mike reminded himself of this, he always knew it was far deeper than that.

Mike was broken from his reverie by Dustin's voice, proclaiming that he saw Will. Mike scanned the gym again, not finding his friend anywhere in sight.

"Wait, is he with a girl?" Lucas asked, furrowing his brows. "I thought he made an arrangement with that guy in our English class."

“Dude,” Dustin breathed, as Will and the girl in question finally fell within Mike’s line of vision. “That’s not his date.”

“Hey guys,” Will approached, a broad smile on his face. “Sorry I was late, I had a little bit of car trouble.”

Lucas had asked Will something else but Mike couldn’t be bothered to pay attention, as his focus was locked on the girl standing behind Will.

He’d imagined this scenario a thousand times in his head. He would be on a walk through the woods and find her, lost and afraid. Maybe she’d show up at his doorstep. Hopper could find her, and as they discussed many times, he would call Mike immediately. He’d wondered how different she would be, if she had the same half smile or the same utter trust that she’d always had in him. He wondered how she would look, if she would be malnourished and dirty. How long her hair would be. He wondered if she would like her hair as much as she liked her wig, not that she even needed it. He wondered if he would be crazy for constantly carrying a package of tissues with him.

He’d imagined this a thousand times, when he was awake at night and thinking about how different things would be if he could have saved her. How much he wished she could be there with him.

And here Eleven was. Right in front of him, at his senior prom.

Her eyes were locked on his, both of them staring at each other in shock and awe for a few seconds. El wondered if he remembered her. Mike wondered if he was dreaming.

“Mike,” El breathed, the sound of her voice filling Mike’s ears like water extinguishing a fire. She was real, she was *here*. With him, like he dreamed she would be.

Her eyes began to glass over as a smile made its way onto Mike’s face. He crossed the short distance between them, wasting no time pulling her into a hug. She immediately threw her arms around his neck, pulling him as close as she possibly could. Mike buried his face in her neck, holding her as if she could disappear at any given

moment. He wasn't entirely convinced he wasn't dreaming, as all too many of the dreams he had at night started like this. But as he heard her sniffing and felt her clutching his tuxedo jacket in her palms, he knew it wasn't a dream. *She's back.*

They finally pulled away enough to look at each other, Mike noticing that Will, Lucas and Dustin had gone their own way at some point. Mike assumed it was to give them their moment, in which he was grateful for.

He looked down to meet her gaze, finding the same brown eyes he had found almost five years ago. She gave him a teary smile, her arms staying around his neck.

"You remember me," she said simply, sounding like she barely believed it herself.

"I couldn't forget about you El, never," Mike insisted, afraid to look away from her for even a second. "I can't believe you're here."

"Is this the Snow Ball?" she asked curiously, eagerly awaiting Mike's response.

Mike chuckled, leaning to rest his forehead against hers. "Not exactly. This is a different dance, it's called prom."

El smiled slightly despite her confusion, feeling her pulse accelerate. "How is it different?"

"It's not, really," Mike shrugged. "It's still a dance. Just different decorations and stuff."

"Oh," El replied in understanding. A brief, comfortable silence fell over them as they swayed lightly to the music (El silently thanked Hopper for at least attempting to teach her how to dance earlier that morning). At some point Mike had closed his eyes as his forehead rested on hers, and El had taken to studying the freckles on his cheeks. Both took the moment to revel in each other's presence, that they could be here together for this moment and not have to worry about if they'll ever see each other again.

El broke the silence first. "Mike?"

“Hmm?” he responded with a slight raise of his eyebrows, not opening his eyes. She allowed a small smile to slip its way onto her face as she continued.

“Can we still go to the Snow Ball too?” she asked.

Mike let out a small laugh under his breath, retracting his forehead from hers and opening his eyes. His eyes were light and full of mirth, something which didn’t escape El. “The Snow Ball already happened this year.”

“Oh,” she responded, unable to mask the slight disappointment in her tone. “Okay.”

Mike wore the same amused smile on his face as he watched her disappointment. “But, we could always have our own Snow Ball?”

A grin broke out onto her face as he explained. “It probably won’t be as decorated as this, and none of these people will be here... but we could, y’know, dance to some Christmas music and stuff like that. If you’d want to.”

“Promise?” she asked, still grinning up at him.

“Promise,” he said confidently, smiling back down at her.

Neither knew which leaned in first, but by the time their lips met for the second time nearly five years later, neither of them cared. El allowed her eyes to drift shut as she tightened her arms around his neck, noticing that this one lasted *much* longer than the first one, to both of their satisfactions.

They parted after what was only a few seconds, ignoring the exciting dance music in the background as they stayed in tune with each other. El found a comfortable spot to lay her head on Mike’s shoulder, and he leaned to press an affectionate kiss to her hair.

A promise is something you don’t break.

And this time, Mike is going to keep his promise.

Author's Note:

this one was pretty self explanatory, but i hope you enjoyed! leave a comment if you enjoy the oneshots :) multichap coming soon!

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